Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-7 (canceled).

Claim 8 (currently amended): A method for providing a stable quality grade for data services within a packet-switching network which has at least one access node for connecting at least one of at least one subscriber terminal and at least one private branch exchange having at least one connected subscriber terminal, and has at least one of a plurality of network nodes for providing data services, the method comprising the steps of:

assigning data packets, which are respectively associated with the data service, at a start of transmission between the at least one network node providing the data service and one of a subscriber terminal and an access node connected to ~~a~~ the subscriber terminal, to a quality class whereupon the data packets are handled within intermediate nodes which forward the data packets;

establishing, via at least one of the at least one network node and at least one intermediate node, and during transmission of the data packets, a quality of the transmission based on acknowledgements indicating a quality grade, and comparing the quality of the transmission with a quality grade demanded by the data service; and

assigning the data packets associated with the data service, depending on a result of the comparison, to another quality class of which the quality grade demanded by the data service is expected.

Claim 9 (currently amended): ~~A~~ The method for providing a stable quality grade for data services within a packet-switching network as claimed in claim 8, wherein a quality class includes a plurality of subordinate priority classes, and the data packets associated with the data service are first assigned to another priority class within a quality class before assignment to another quality class occurs.

Claim 10 (currently amended): ~~A~~ The method for providing a stable quality grade for data services within a packet-switching network as claimed in claim 9, wherein, if the data packets associated with the data service are assigned to another quality class, the data packets are first assigned to a lowest priority class.

Claim 11 (currently amended): ~~A~~ The method for providing a stable quality grade for data services within a packet-switching network as claimed in claim 9, wherein at least one upper and at least one lower threshold value is stipulated for the comparison between the acknowledged quality grade and the quality grade demanded by the data service and, if the at least one upper threshold value is exceeded by the difference between the demanded quality grade and the acknowledged quality grade, the data packets associated with the data service are assigned to one of a higher quality class and a higher priority class and, if the at least one lower threshold value is undershot by the difference between the demanded quality grade and the acknowledged quality grade, the data packets are assigned to one of a low quality class and a low priority class.

Claim 12 (currently amended): ~~A~~ The method for providing a stable quality grade for data services within a packet-switching network as claimed in claim 9, wherein, besides the quality of the transmission of the data packets, a network utilization level is also acknowledged and, if the acknowledged quality grade and the quality grade demanded by the data service have a substantially same value and the network utilization level is high, the data packets are preferably assigned to one of a high quality class and a high priority class and, if the acknowledged quality grade and the quality grade demanded by the data service have a substantially same value and the network utilization level is low, the data packets are preferably assigned to one of a low quality class and a low priority class.

Claim 13 (currently amended): ~~A~~ The method for providing a stable quality grade for data services within a packet-switching network as claimed in claim 9, wherein the data packets arriving at an intermediate node and associated with the data service are temporarily

stored in a queue, which is based on the quality class of the data packets, before the data packets are forwarded.

Claim 14 (currently amended): ~~A~~ The method for providing a stable quality grade for data services within a packet-switching network as claimed in claim 9, wherein the data packets arriving at an intermediate node and associated with the data service are temporarily stored in a queue before being forwarded and are characterized using a marker which is based on a priority class of the data packets and which can be used to discard the characterized data packets if the queue overflows.